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## **‘Connector’ in design phase: Beardsley project could start this fall**

*By Julie Anne Conolly, Independent Newspapers*

When residents attended community meetings in 2005 about a proposed connector to Beardsley Road and Loop 101, the slated start in 2009 seemed in the distant future.

Construction on the \$30 million project, designed to provide additional access to Loop 101 from northern Peoria, could start as early as this fall.

The Arizona Department of Transportation, Peoria and Glendale have joined forces to extend Beardsley Road from 81st Avenue across the New River via a bridge. It will connect to a one-way frontage road, starting at 75th Avenue and ending at Union Hills Drive. An overpass of Loop 101 will run parallel to Union Hills Drive and allow frontage road traffic to merge onto northbound Loop 101.

“It will provide a much freer flow of traffic in such a high-density area,” said Tim Tait, ADOT spokesman. “Another access to Loop 101 will be a relief. Bell Road and Union Hills Drive get quite busy.”

The project is in the final design phase, and city officials are still working on a timeline.

“We’re going to be doing the construction in phases,” said Peoria’s project manager Chris Kmetty. “We will start construction in fiscal year 2008, which actually starts this July.”

He noted ADOT will not begin their construction until fiscal year 2009, which begins in July 2008, but the city will try to complete their part of the project before then.

“We will start construction this fall on work up to ADOT’s right of way,” Mr. Kmetty said.

He said the city would start work on improvements to Beardsley Road at 83rd Avenue and Lake Pleasant Road.

“We will widen Beardsley Road through 81st Avenue and then build it across the bridge to tie it into 75th Avenue,” Mr. Kmetty said.

Mr. Kmetty said to expect some delays, but city officials are scoping ways to keep an already busy intersection flowing.

“We shouldn’t need to close Beardsley Road, but there will be construction delays,” Mr. Kmetty. “We will maintain the flow of traffic.”

The main project, the frontage road, overpass and ramps to Loop 101, will begin construction in fall 2008, Mr. Kmetty estimates.

The \$30 million project funding comes from the County's half-cent transportation tax, the city's general fund, development impact fees and general obligation bonds.

"It's all part of the Maricopa Association of Government's Regional Transportation Program," Mr. Kmetty said.

Last year the Arizona Legislature allocated \$300 million to accelerate transportation projects. Similar legislation is being proposed this year, though officials were vague as to whether it would help the Beardsley Connector.

"At ADOT, we prepare every project with the possibility that it could be accelerated," Mr. Tait said. "But there are a lot of deciding factors as to what projects move up the list."

Mr. Kmetty noted as ADOT is finishing their final design for the connector, they are examining the possibility of combining it with a project to add more lanes to Union Hills Drive at the Loop 101 intersection.

"It would be a great area of cleaning the traffic in that area all at one time," Mr. Kmetty said.

Mr. Tait would not confirm the possibility of a Union Hills Drive expansion.

"We can't speculate on what the final project will be until we have completed the design phase," Mr. Tait said.

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